

Lakewood - Congresswoman Linda Sánchez met with 39th District residents in a series of senior center visits in the cities of Artesia, Cerritos, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, Lakewood, Los Nietos, Los Angeles and Paramount. Sánchez provided the latest information about the status of Medicare and prescription drugs in the wake of the passage of the sham Republican Prescription Drug Bill (H.R.1), which passed the U.S. House by one vote (216 to 215) on June 27, 2003.

Sánchez listened to the opinions and personal stories of a diverse group of seniors over the course of her senior center tour. She offered assistance with questions and concerns about how this new legislation will impact their daily lives in the coming months and years. The Congresswoman also conducted a survey to get the thoughts and opinions of California seniors.

Among the respondents was Ruth Stringer of Los Angeles County who explained the struggle of prescription drugs “is not having enough money to pay for the medication not covered by Medicare.”

Ernestine Matthews, also of the LA area, echoed this concern “one medication that I have to pay for monthly is a blood thinner because the insurance company does not cover the brand that the doctor has prescribed for me.”

The Republican bill passed by the U.S. House leaves seniors with inadequate prescriptions drug coverage:

Seniors are required to pay a deductible of \$250 and a minimum \$35 monthly premium. They would receive coverage for 80% of their annual drug costs up to \$2,000. However, if a person’s medications go over \$2,000, but do not total more than \$3,500, they receive no insurance coverage.

Only after a senior reaches \$3,500 of expenses does coverage kicks back in.

This plan takes income and assets into account for coverage.

Under the Democratic prescription drug plan, seniors have universal and voluntary coverage:

Seniors only pay a deductible of \$100 and a monthly premium of .

Seniors would receive coverage for 80% of their annual drug costs up to \$2,000.

After reaching \$2,000 all of their prescription drugs costs will be covered in full. This plan does not take income and assets into account for coverage, and there are no gaps or gimmicks.

The plan also provides coverage for any drug that a doctor prescribes and is voluntary and universal.

“Our seniors need a plan that will provide coverage for any drug their doctor prescribes. Limiting access to quality care or capping drug benefits denies our seniors the chance to maintain healthy lifestyles. Our seniors deserve better,” said Congresswoman Linda Sánchez.

Congresswoman Linda Sanchez is working to ensure that senior residents of the 39th District receive access to quality supportive services. One of Sanchez' top legislative priorities is to create and support initiatives that do not shortchange America's seniors. From working to find new ways to improve Medicare, to ensuring that seniors have access to the prescriptions drugs they need, Congresswoman Linda Sanchez is pursuing positive impacts on these critical issues.

"With more than 35.4 million people in the United States over the age of 65, it is important that public policies respond to the needs of our parents and grandparents. How we choose to respond to these issues is a direct reflection of our values. We as a society need to show, through our actions, that we value the senior members of our families and communities," said Sanchez.